



Prifysgol Cymru
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University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Postgraduate/Distance Learning Assignment coversheet & feedback form

THIS SHEET MUST BE THE FIRST PAGE OF THE ASSIGNMENT YOU ARE
SUBMITTING (DO NOT SEND AS A SEPARATE FILE)

For completion by the student: <i>Demie Buckley</i>		
Student Name:		
Module code:	Student ID number:	Educational support needs: Yes/No
Module title:		
Module tutor:		
Assignment due date:		
If your module has multiple submissions please indicate which piece of work this is. 1 st ☐ 2 nd ☐ 3 rd ☐ 4 th ☐ 5 th ☐ 6 th ☐		
I confirm that this is my original work and that I have adhered to the University policy on plagiarism. Signed		
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Assignment Mark		
1 st Marker's Provisional mark	53	
2 nd Marker's/Moderator's provisional mark		
Agreed Internal Mark:		
External Examiner's mark (if relevant)		
Final Mark		
NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the Final Examination Board.		

This is a conscientious piece of work that draws on a range of relevant reading materials. One of the main weaknesses of the essay, though, is the structure, which tends to break down & lead to inaccuracies in presentation. Example - sec 2 - you claim that you disagree that existing & future people deserve consideration & discuss arguments to this effect, but in the conclusion you claim otherwise. Try to re-think the presentation. So you think a certain stance is implausible then ~~agree~~ ~~for this~~ you can say so, & present an argument to show why it is implausible.

For completion by Marker 1:
 Comments:
 Marker's signature:
 Date:
 For completion by Marker 2/Moderator:
 Comments:
 Marker's signature:
 Date:
 Avoid blatantly agreeing and disagreeing to a claim. Renew strengths & weaknesses before you reach a conclusion.

That said, overall, you reveal knowledge of relevant facts, ideas & key claims, as well as an understanding of some of the main arguments & underlying concepts.

AGREED INTERNAL MARK (where necessary):
 Comment on process on arriving at agreed mark:
 External Examiner's comments (if relevant)
 External Examiner's signature:
 Date:

53%. RHA.

Do only existing people deserve moral consideration or do people who will almost certainly come into existence also deserve moral consideration?

Introduction:

My aim, within this essay is to question and discuss if it is only existing people who deserve moral consideration or does this extend to people who will almost certainly come into existence also?

Section 1: My aim and focus will agree that existing people and almost certain people coming into existence deserve moral consideration and the reasoning why this is so.

Section 2: I will disagree that existing people and almost certain people coming into existence do and will not deserve moral consideration and the reasoning why this is so.

Section 3: My aim will be to take a position on both sections 1 and 2 and discuss the thoughts that resonate with my understanding and viewpoint that only existing people deserve moral consideration or if this extends to future people who most certainly will come into existence.

In my conclusion, my aim will be to summarise what I have discussed throughout the essay.

To begin, I would like to explain moral consideration according to Attfield:

"Moral standing or considerability belongs to whatever has a good of its own; apart from formally constituted human groups, this class is comprised by individual living organisms, both those with actual recent, present, or future lives, and those whose possible existence can be facilitated or prevented by moral agents". (Attfield, 1995.p.27)

I believe it is useful to note the term anthropocentrism during this introduction, which is a term used for moral standing of human beings alone. According to Humphreys (2014, p.3) being human is necessary and sufficient for having a moral standing. Sentientism a further term, recognises a wider stance from anthropocentrism to include all sentient beings having moral standing and finally biocentrism extends further to include all living things as having moral standing. In this essay the question surrounds human beings and therefore this will be the main discussion however from my own perspective I do consider myself a biocentrist since reading this literature.

A question arises throughout the essay as to whether we have obligations to identifiable people only and whether we should prefer the quality of life over the quantity of life for human beings.

Say that this is anthropocentrism. Humphreys' definition of anthropocentrism.

But you've said above you'll disagree that existing people & future people deserve consideration. So consider how you present your claims.

Denise Buckley
Student Number: 1808370
(HPPH7009): Environmental Philosophy
Submission Date: 10th September 2021
Tutor: Dr. Rebekah Humphreys

Attfield (2014) explains when we think about future generations that includes children conceived in the coming months and born next year and those that will inherit our future environment and the problems that will be uncovered in the coming years.

Zuolo (2017 p.178) clarifies his stance on what is moral status as "the basic moral consideration that we ought to make with regard to a being in virtue of its or her features alone". He continues to state that these features depend on the theory used for the detail of what is moral status, namely cognitive capacities, whether or not a being is sentient, the capacity to be in a relationship with another human being, the capacity for agency or thereof. ✓
He does continue to say that we do owe to individuals and that what we owe depends on one's needs etc. As a result, Zuolo (2017 p.178) states "the moral status only determines whether a being is owed some moral consideration or not (a living being vs. a stone)".

Section 1:

In this section I will agree that ~~moral standing for~~ human beings and almost certain future human beings do deserve moral consideration.

Paul Ehrlich's 1968 book, *The Population Bomb* describes the sobering future scenario where more and more people go to bed a little more hungrier each year and therefore it may seem inevitable that if we continue the logical conclusion there will be mass starvation. If resources are depleting and our environment is degrading and ultimately this is having a negative impact on people's well-being, it can be said that the world is overpopulated. If within this section, we are also concerned about the quality of people's lives and that future people also deserve moral standing as well as existing people, we must therefore consider the negative impacts of the growing population on the environment and its future generations.

The Routley's in their 1978 paper "Nuclear Energy and Obligations to the Future" argue that we need to have obligations for future people and even future generations as there will be a delayed impact on certain actions that if are not adhered to could turn out dangerous for closer generations to come. *eg. nuclear waste*

argues
O'Neill (1993) ~~agrees~~ that we should attempt to ensure that future generations belong to a community and are capable of enhancement and contribution in the areas of science, art and the environment. He argues that we are to pass on our understandings and values to future generations ensuring that there will be future communities. ✓

Brian Barry (1991) within his theory of contractarianism argues that fairness between generations should be the basis of a decent contract and that any generation that was

*As
O'Neill &
Routley
do
not
necessarily
agree*

deprived of resources by their ancestors should be compensated by the next generation. This would involve technological and capital investments to counteract any depletion. ✓

The total view approach mentions an important point of whether we have obligations to present people only. However advocates of this view agree that future people do have the right to moral standing even though their existence depends on current generations and do not exist currently. Humphreys (2021) states "the good or harm of people who could be brought into existence count as reasons for or against actions which could bring them into being". This key point promotes that all human life is of positive value for existence. The total view also details that humanity should not become extinct and that even if there were lives of negative value or not worth living providing the overall lives of future generations are worth living and of positive value this would counterbalance any negative values that could occur. Preventing misery is another focal point for discussion and this could lead to the view that human extinction could and should be possible. *Good points.*

Even if they are not worth living?

Goodwin (2015 p.914) states "moral patients deserve moral consideration and concern – they have moral standing". He details how this is important as it determines how people conceptualise the moral world and how entities (human and non-human) are treated. He quotes from research that both psychologists and philosophers have revealed that there are "three main drives of moral standing: the capacity to suffer, intelligence or autonomy (agency), and the nature of an entity's disposition (whether it is harmful)". He concludes by stating that all moral patients do have moral standing and that they can be wronged morally directly due to their interests and that moral standing is heightened due to the entities capacity to suffer and possess agency. He also believes that privileges are granted to persons and a more basic approach is granted to animals. He believes there is much research needed within these areas.

How are these paras linked by the non-identity problem?

To expand further into the area of the non-identity problem, firstly we can see the above agreements that philosophers take the stance that we do have obligations regarding future generations but the question can be how far do these future generations extend, is it as far as we can perceive the impact of our current actions? Another question to add would be are these future people actually benefiting or being harmed by our actions? This is where the term non-identity problem arises. Depending on different social policies, this is where different individuals come into existence. Derek Parfit (1986, p.361) states "How many of us can truly claim, 'Even if railways and motor cars had never been invented, I would still have been born'?" This stance is continued by the person-affecting principle in which I address in the Section 2.

Denise Buckley

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Sorry - reprinted
p. 3. ignore.

To summarise Section 1, I uncover certain literature that agrees that existing people deserve moral consideration as well as future people who will almost certainly come into existence. If we were to consider the extinction of the human race as a possibility, this is a massive threat towards humanity and could be viewed as evil. Attfield (1999) states we could try to account for the value of humanity and individual activities but having humanity eradicated may make these activities meaningless.

Section 2:

In this section I will disagree that moral standing for human beings and almost certain future human beings do not deserve moral consideration.

It is Golding (1981) who claims that we share a common experience with our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and he believes that this should be treated differently than for future generations who currently do not exist. He believes that although future people will benefit by our generations, we cannot benefit from them. He also states that if we value a sense of a shared community life, the further the generations are from us the less likely we are to share in that community life. We may even do nothing for the future of generations to come so as to avoid doing something that could be the opposite of us doing some good. Ultimately Golding states that our ignorance of what future people want or need is a good reason to disagree that future generations deserve moral consideration. He does not however, discuss or mention that future people will still require basic human needs within their lifespan.

Attfield (1999) takes the stance that does not necessarily focus on future generations deserving moral consideration but states that all basic needs should be met and prioritised for each generation. Attfield (2003) continues to say that obligations dependent on a relationship agreement, voluntary participation or based on love can not hold together as these factors are widely spaced out in time and cannot hold therefore there is no requirement to take into account the moral consideration of future people. Attfield's bus example describes how we do not need to know if the manufacturer has made any agreement with the passengers or if they love each other in order to prove his/her responsibility to the travelling public. It could be perceived here that these relationships could promote motivation to think and care about the future, especially the near future whether the reasons are dedication or love but these responsibilities cannot be depending on these matters.

Attfield (2014 p.103) details a worrying stance in the following paragraph:

"What is clear is that there will be at some point be a serious problem if the human population increases to a level at which it cannot be recurrently sustained by the life-support systems and productive capacities of the planet; and that even before this point is reached there will be problems whenever increases of the human population significantly conflict with the preservation of biodiversity".

In Weinberg's (2013) paper on *Existence: Who needs it? The Non-identity problem and merely possible people* she discusses that obviously we care about people who exist and a little less obviously we care about those people who will exist but should we care about those who may exist possibly? She writes regarding David Velleman (p.471) who argues "that what might have happened to you – an existent person – often doesn't merit moral consideration since the alternative person one would have been, had what might have happened actually happened is a merely possible person about whom one has no reason to care". She agrees that this way of thinking can eliminate the non-identity problem. She summarises (p.484) "the non-identity problem cannot be avoided or solved by adding merely possible people to the list of morally relevant entities". She believes we are left with the "ordinary, boring, common sense view: real people matter so we care about what happens to them and often make judgments of gratitude or regret in the context of the alternatives, i.e. of what could have happened instead". She concludes that we have to solve the non-identity problem by dealing with real people and their real alternatives.

Humphreys (2021) writes "Thus, bar people who have already been conceived, the identity of future people is not yet determined. Since future generations do not in fact exist, there are no future people to whom we could have obligations. So it seems that we can have no obligations to future people". This has led some people to believe that the person-affecting principle which says we only have obligations towards people that actually exist. The term person-affecting principle devised by Derek Parfit and revised by Peter Singer to include all non-human beings' details that if there is no person identifiable then no harm or wrong can be done. It does not state any issues in relation to actions that generate differences between one set of individuals and another set of individuals. The person-affecting principle only takes into account actual people and future people are therefore not included or our obligations to generate them. A further point within this area includes the non-identity of cases. This details the choices humans make in relation to conceiving and what if a choice made is considered bad or a wrong decision, does this impact on the quality of life for the human being? Will that impact for that person be that they would regret being born? Therefore, the question occurs as to how that human being has wronged the new life of the human being. Humphreys (2021) states "on the person-affecting principle, it makes no sense to say that someone has been wronged unless some particular person is made worse off

than she would have been otherwise as a result of what is done to her. But nobody has been made worse off by our choice than they would have been had we chosen differently, for then none of these particular persons in the above scenario would have existed had we acted otherwise".

To summarise Section 2, I uncover literature that disagrees that existing people deserve moral consideration as well as future people who will almost certainly come into existence

Section 3:

In this section I will give my own viewpoint that resonates with being a Biocentrist, that moral standing for human beings currently and possible future human beings do deserve moral consideration. *we all bring creatures (as a biocentrist).*

O'Neill (1993 p.43) explains how environmentalists have and are currently projecting to us a view of doomsday predictions and that we are already at the final generation or generations. "Ecological fear without a sense of the possibility of change can induce an image of our approach to an end after which there is no future". He believes that for a future to exist we must therefore *now* have a sense of relationship with this future in order for it to exist. O'Neill focuses on a sense of community and how we have an obligation to pass on our values to future generations in order to create future communities. This resonates directly with my previous reading on Confucius and the Neo-Confucians whose core teaching was based upon the enhancement of the self first and foremost which then effects family and community. Leading by example with an ultimate self-purpose to live a life fulfilled was apparent across the literature surrounding Confucius.

My understanding of Golding (1981) is that he stems from a negative disposition in that it is safer to live presently with no thought or action for the future as we will not know the outcome and how it will effect us. To me this is an anthropocentric viewpoint that could be considered relatively self-centred. It is from my being that I would not like to believe this way of living would be beneficial for future generations and at least even if I did live to the best of my ability now, I would feel that I have participated in the enhancement for future generations or at least not within a harmful way that could affect future generations.

John Rawls in his 1971 book *A Theory of Justice* describes a term phrased as the "veil of ignorance" and questions if we were about to be born into this world without any concept of where or who we were being born into, how would we wish to perceive our birth rights. As this can be perceived as logically we would choose the best circumstances possible, it proves that we have a long way to go to achieve this for all human beings and for future

These are all stances that limit moral consideration with regards to future people / spatial and / or temporal limits - so should be discussed in Sec. 2

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entirely correct. These may be sufficient but not necessary.

generations. It is important for me to note that Rawls' discussion excludes animals as they are not in a position to make a decision that human beings are capable of moral agency.

All the above approaches including contractarianism are based on some sort of agreement or contract. I believe human beings need an emotional connection which can include love and the joy for other human beings which in turn makes individuals happy. It is Atfield who argues that we should not have an agreement with existing contracts or communities or any emotional attachment. My personal emotional reaction to this is one of disagreement, as an emotional human being I enjoy as well as connect with every human I interact with (generally) and enjoy this possibility. As an individual, I do think of future generations as my responsibility with regards to how I live during this life and how my life will affect future generations (regardless of having children or not having children). I believe I have a responsibility for myself firstly which in turn, I believe affects my immediate family, which then affects my community and the broader society. I believe my responsibility begins with myself first. Consequentialism considers us to take into account our present actions even if these actions cannot be seen to impact future generations or even our lack of concern for future generations. From my understanding, I believe this could be difficult for some human beings.

How is this relevant to me essay?

Is this enough to base a claim or argument on?

It is Zuolo (2017 p.186) within his paper *Equality, its Basis and Moral Status: Challenging the Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests* who recaps in his argument that equal consideration of interests "cannot ground equal treatment without referring to the equal status of the individuals to which it applies". This is an interesting point especially if we apply this thinking toward future generations. — Explain —

future ones.

There is much within the literature that is evidenced that we do have an obligation to future generations and that human beings do deserve moral consideration, this makes my being happy and grateful that people consider this important in their life. My understanding of communities is that they are still largely evident in many societies currently, for example, Irish communities, Welsh communities and Chinese communities to name a few. I believe that this stance is helpful for passing on values for future generations and for enhancing the wellbeing of humans in order to enhance/protect and develop their environment.

There is one caveat to my understanding that we have responsibility to future generations and that all human beings (including all life forms) deserve moral consideration is the scientific theory of the Bacterial growth curve. From my little understanding of this theory, it shows that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors are required for the production of bacteria which in effect can halt growth on the planet. I have much to learn within this area but I

believe there could be more research surrounding this topic in relation to environmental philosophy.

Conclusion:

It is Partridge (1981, p.217) in his paper that defends his position in detailing a healthy, functioning human being that has "a basic and pervasive need to transcend themselves" identifying themselves as part of a larger whole with ideals that are ongoing and who endure projects, processes and institutions within this whole. This approach resonates for me and includes previous study I have undertaken within Eastern Philosophies more specifically regarding Confucius and the Neo-Confucians.

Partridge (1981, p.218) and I also agree that we owe it to ourselves "to be duty-bound to posterity, in a manner that genuinely focuses upon future needs rather than on our own". He states that by fulfilling our duties to posterity, "we may now earn and enjoy, in our self-fulfilment, the favors of posterity". I agree that if we live in a manner that is deemed correct for us we can then feel fulfilled that the future of posterity will unfold in a correct manner. My argument towards this point would be that even if we do live the best we can, sometimes unexpected issues can arise during this lifetime and they can often appear or could be viewed as negative. My response to this would be, to respond to this unexpected negative with the same response as Partridge states (although there may be a need to relax total posterity if it was required for example for a reason such as saving the life of an individual), doing so with the best of our ability.

Parfit (1986) enables us to view two choices: Depletion and Conservation. Depletion allows us to live slightly better off for the next 300 years as we consume all natural resources and afterwards the following generations will have a very low quality of life because of this. Conservation will allow us to be less better off now but future generations, after 300 or more years will be much better off. Parfit states that if there is a greater lowering of the quality of life, it must provide us with moral reason as to why we should not choose depletion.

Attfield (2014, p.133) clarifies "the current generation can make large differences to the numbers and quality of life of future generations". He also continues to say that "future-related responsibilities are shown to include resisting environmental injustice in the present". And finally Attfield positively concludes "future interests (and non-human interests too) should ideally be represented in current decision-making".

To conclude, I believe that existing people deserve moral consideration as well as people who will almost certainly come into existence. From a Biocentrist point of view I would wish

to further develop the essay question and response to include all living things as having moral consideration and standing. Thankfully within my family and immediate community I have first-hand experience of my fellow friends and family participating in life in the same manner. I also believe that with current media, information and knowledge many life experiences are changing and enhancing for the better. Awareness of negative global issues are becoming more relevant and discussion more prevalent. As a result I believe, with continued awareness and progressive action, the benefits for future generations must therefore occur.

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well laid out.